

January 16, 1957

Sociedad Numismatica Puertorriquena
P. O. Box 8841, Fernandez Juncos Station
Santurce, Puerto Rico

Gentlemen:

Your ideas as to the origin of the dollar sign are, as you know, scattered throughout numismatic literature but assertions are not proof.

As you know, the first use of the dollar sign has a single stroke through the S and was, apparently, used by a government clerk. The S certainly must have stood for a Spanish dollar. The single stroke is difficult to understand. It is therefore necessary to determine when the double stroke began to be used. The double stroke must have referred to the current Spanish pieces of eight.

If you do not already have the information as to the first use of the S with the single stroke I will be glad to send you the proper citation.

You have certainly picked a subject on which there is substantial misinformation and groundless theories.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN
400 Washington Avenue
St. Louis 2, Missouri
U.S.A.

EPN/atb

ROBERT R. PRANN
CONTRACTING ENGINEER
P. O. BOX 8841 TEL. 2-4471
FERNANDEZ JUNCOS STA.
SANTURCE, PUERTO RICO

CABLE ADDRESS:
PRANN, SAN JUAN, P. R.

February 5, 1957

Mr. Eric P. Newman
400 Washington Avenue
St. Louis 2,
Missouri

Dear Mr. Newman ;

I have been appointed to reply to all correspondence resulting from the advertisement of the Sociedad Numismática Puertorriqueña regarding the U. S. dollar sign which appeared in the January issue of The Numismatist.

Your letter to us of Jan. 16, 1957, together with numerous other replies to our advertisement in The Numismatist convinces us that there are a great many people who are interested in determining the true origin of our dollar sign.

The wording of your letter would indicate that you might be able to help us in our search for light and truth in the matter.

We wonder why you believe that this symbol was first used by a government clerk. We would certainly greatly appreciate your citing any authority.

Mr. Joseph Webb of Bethesda, Maryland refers us to A. S. Bolles' "Financial History of the United States" and to Florian Cajori's "History of Mathematical Notations". Can you suggest to us any additional publications ?

Sincerely;



Robert R. Prann

ctp

February 11, 1957

Mr. Robert R. Prann
P. O. Box 8841
Bernandez Juncos Sta.
Santurce, Puerto Rico

Dear Mr. Prann:

As owner of some of your Colonials, I was delighted to hear from you with respect to the dollar sign.

You asked for my authority as to the first use of the dollar sign and I am enclosing a reproduction of the article in the Numismatist which appeared in 1929 and is the only worthwhile writing on the subject. The index to the Numismatist and various dictionaries of Americanisms, etc. are full of misinformation and I have many citations of early newspapers and articles giving theories without facts.

After you have read the enclosed article you will see that to improve upon it will require an enormous amount of research. You will notice in the enclosed article the New Orleans clerk who used the first dollar sign so far known. If I can be of further help to you, please let me know. If you receive any information which contradicts Cajori I would be most interested.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN

EPN/atb

THE FIRST APPEARANCE OF THE DOLLAR SIGN

- 18 ———. 1797. - Lee, Chauncey. The American Accomptant; being a plain practical and systematic Compendium of Federal Arithmetic; designed for the use of schools. With engraved frontispiece of coins, and diagrams and tables in the text. 8vo. Calf. Lansingburgh: Wm.W.Wands, 1797. \$ 20.00

Karpinski, A History of Arithmetic, p.96 & facs. p.153; not in Bentley,
Harry C. & Leonard, Ruth S. Bibliography of works on Accounting by American authors. Vol.I, 1796-1900. Boston, 1934.

March 2, 1962

Mr. Robert R. Prann
P.O.Box 4481
Fernando Juncos Station
Santurce, Puerto Rico

Dear Mr. Prann:

It was delightful to have you come over to the hotel last Friday night. I enjoyed it to the fullest extent. I came home and immediately looked into the Spanish Colonial silver matter we discussed.

I have taken my microfilm with respect to the Spanish money circulating in the United States and am having the appropriate portions printed off for you.

I am also enclosing a memorandum of the counterfeit Spanish Colonial dollars found in circulation by the assayer of the New Orleans Mint. This is published in "A Monograph of the Silver Dollar" by J. L. Riddell, in 1845. I will keep my eyes open for a copy of this book for you as it is fascinating.

I believe you were going to send me a couple of coppers from the Santo Domingo Mint; also a counterfeit Chalmers and a gilted Spanish dollar fake.

I also want to purchase a few dollars to fill in my collection and I would be very grateful if you have any of the following:

Dollars from any mint dated 1782, 1790, 1791 and 1804.

One specimen from the Santiago Mint, of a Pillar Dollar, of Charles III, Charles IIII and Ferdinand VII.

One specimen from the Potosi Mint, of a Pillar Dollar and of a Dollar of Charles IV.

One specimen from the Guatemala Mint, of Charles III, Charles IV and Ferdinand VII with bust of Charles IV.

March 2, 1962

Mr. Robert R. Prann
P.O.Box 4481
Fernando Juncos Station
Santurce, Puerto Rico

One specimen from the Popayan Mint of Ferdinand VII

One specimen from the N.R.Mint of Ferdinand VI Pillar Dollar

One specimen from the Lima Mint of a Ferdinand VI Pillar Dollar, of a Charles III Pillar Dollar and a Charles IV bust dollar.

One specimen of an 1811 or 1812 sand cast genuine Mexican dollar

One specimen from the Guanajuato Mint.

I also would like very much to have a Pillar four real from any mint.

Any counterfeit of dollars you have would be most interesting to me.

While looking over the items in question I found a bronze oval Puerto Rico medal, in uncirculated condition. On one side is Queen Isabella II. On the other is a lamb holding a cross with an inscription which seems to indicate Royal Academy of the Letters and Arts of Puerto Rico ala Aplicacion. Is this something which is of interest to you?

Please write me and tell me which ones of the coins you have which I can acquire. Incidentally, you were going to send me a list of your wants so that if I find them I can let you know.

Cordially yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN

EPN/atb

of the following:

Dollars from any mint dated 1782, 1790, 1791 and 1804.

One specimen from the Santiago Mint, of a Pillar Dollar, of Charles III, Charles IIII and Ferdinand VII.

~~One specimen from~~
the Potosi Mint, of a Pillar Dollar and of a Dollar of Charles IV.

~~One specimen from~~
the Guatemala Mint, of Charles III, Charles IV and Ferdinand VII with bust of Charles IV

~~One specimen from~~
the Popayan Mint, of Ferdinand VII ~~piece~~

~~One specimen from~~
the N.R. Mint, of Ferdinand VI Pillar Dollar

~~One specimen from~~
the Lima Mint, of a Ferdinand VI Pillar Dollar, of a Charles III Pillar Dollar and a Charles IV bust dollar.

One specimen of an 1811 or 1812 Sand cast genuine Mexican dollar.

One specimen ~~I do not have any dollar~~ from Guanajuato Mint.

I also would like very much to have a Pillar four real from any mint.

Any counterfeits ^{of dollars} you have would be most interesting to me.

Excerpt from Riddell
Monograph of the Silver Dollar, 1845

Counterfeits

	Date	Mint	Fineness	Value	Wt
Class III ↙ ↘	1778	Mo	230	\$.23	# ^w .900
	1781	Mo	360	.36	.900
	1783	Mo	450	.43	.870
	1784	Mo	5	—	.900
	1787	Mo	380	.418	.990
	1789	Mo	15	.16	1.000
	1800	Mo	354	.397	1.010
	1801	Mo	317	.334	.950
	1801	Mo	225	.24	.960
	1802	Mo	264	.302	1.030
	1805	Mo	270	.282	.940
	1805	Mo	500	.527	.950
	1808	Mo	450	.485	.990
	1808	Mo	500	.555	1.000
	1811	Mo	670	.64	.860
Class IV ↙ ↘	1813	Mo	330	.348	.950
	1818	Mo	200	.193	.870
	1818	Mo	450	.49	.980
	1822	Mo	280	.329	1.060
	1824	Mo	312	.332	.960
	?	Mo	175	.186	.960
	?	Mo	490	.55	1.010
	?	Mo	450	.485	.970
	1813	Mo	390	.381	.880
	1814	Mo	690	.751	.980
Ferd VIII ↙ ↘	1815	Mo	200	.197	.890
	1821	Z	700	.692	.890
	1821	D	560	.622	1.000
	1821	Z	600	.633	.950
	1821	Mo	250	.261	.940
	1821	Z	312	.322	.930
	1822	G	677	.707	.940

1822

Z

285

, 313

.990

No others are included
except independent Mexico counterfeiters

March 7, 1962

Mr. Robert R. Prann
P.O.Box 4481
Fernando Juncos Station
Santurce, Puerto Rico

Dear Mr. Prann:

As a teaser, I am sending you some excerpts from the letter of January 28, 1830 from Samuel Moore, Director of the Mint, to Mr. Sanford. This was in answer to an official inquiry and is, in my mind, extremely interesting.

Sincerely yours,

ERIC P. NEWMAN

EPN/atb

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